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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

April 24, 2008

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The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In our brief meeting on April 17th, you assured me that the Appropriations Committee would not abdicate to your leadership its responsibility to write the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill. Yet, I continue to read news reports quoting members of your leadership indicating that they are finalizing the details of work that should, and must, originate from the Appropriations Committee. Even more unfathomable is that your leadership—which includes three former members of our Committee—would consider circumventing the well-established rules and procedures of the Appropriations Committee.

Members of the Appropriations Committee—Democrats and Republicans—deserve an explanation as to why they are being shut out by the Speaker and Democrat leadership from formulating a spending package that, by many accounts, will total nearly \$200 billion. For the record, under the GOP majority, the Democrat minority offered and had roll call votes on 46 individual amendments during full Committee consideration of Emergency Supplemental bills from 1995-2006. How can you disregard this precedent? How can you, in good conscience, explain to your Subcommittee Chairmen and other Committee members that they have no role in the process of writing this critical legislation?

Precedent and tradition dictates that we pursue an open and transparent process, and ensure full participation by both parties—not behind closed doors but in the light of day—including the opportunity for Members on both sides of the aisle to offer and debate amendments. Every Member of the Appropriations Committee deserves to have their voice heard in full Committee prior to consideration by the full House. For example, I feel strongly that continued dalliance on the FISA issue puts our country in grave danger. It would be my intent to offer an amendment at full Committee to address this critical lapse in national security. I'm certain other Members of our Committee would also like the opportunity to offer amendments.

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I am eager to see our Committee return to the well-established and traditional open process that, until last year, had been the hallmark of our work. Let me be perfectly clear: Any attempt to bypass the full Committee and move the Emergency Supplemental directly to the House floor will be met with the unified opposition of Committee Republicans. We will not hesitate to exercise every option available under the Rules of the House to make our voice heard.

David, I urge you in the strongest terms possible to join me in embracing a return to regular order so all of our Committee Members may have their voices heard in fashioning the Emergency Supplemental, and so we can quickly begin the process of formulating and moving forward with our fiscal year 2009 bills.

Sincerely,



Jerry Lewis

cc: Speaker Nancy Pelosi
Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
Republican Leader John Boehner
Republican Whip Roy Blunt